

OUR LAYMEN.

Now that the general missionary campaign under the auspices of the Laymen's Missionary Movement is well under way, it is pertinent to inquire afresh as to its meaning and value.

It means the concerted and harmonious effort of the various evangelical Christian bodies of this country in giving the gospel to all the world. In an intelligent and business-like way the Churches are to work together in performing the task which the Master laid upon the heart of the Church in his great commission. Foreign Missions is not a new or a nineteenth century enterprise as is sometimes affirmed, but on the contrary the Church has at different periods done more in proportion to its numbers and resources to evangelize the regions beyond than was done at any period of the nineteenth century.

The Christianizing of continental Europe and the British Isles was essentially foreign mission work. But never, probably, since the disciples were scattered abroad and went everywhere preaching the word, has there been such a general, intelligent and systematic effort made to fulfill this supreme commission as now. There has never been such opportunity, and never such abundance of resource, and only at rare periods has there been such cordial confidence and good will existing among differing religious organizations.

The business sense of our day speaks out and says: If we are to do this thing let it be done in the most effective way—a way that appeals to our best judgment and to our instinct of Christian fellowship and helpfulness. It is a happy omen that such a period has fully come in the progress of the Kingdom.

In this larger vision the temptation to local or sectarian rivalries is discouraged and men are understanding as formerly they had not done, the meaning of those words, "The field is the world." They are learning that the best means of developing the spiritual life of the local Church and of purifying and intensifying the faith for which the denomination stands, is to advance shoulder to shoulder with the hosts of the Lord in winning the victories which he has planned and promised against the Kingdom of darkness. The forgetfulness of selfish interests, for true religion can be affected by narrowness and selfishness, which is stimulated by a mighty movement which has for its end and its hope the spiritual transformation of the race, is itself a reflex effect of priceless value. It promises to readjust the attitude of many a believer toward his conception of duty and toward his personal relation to the Kingdom of grace. Are we called into the Kingdom to be nourished, or to nourish; to be helped, or to help; to be ministered unto, or to minister? If we mistake not, men are rapidly learning to hearken to the apostle's words, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who . . . made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant."

The error of the past has been partly rooted in clericalism. Not only has too much prominence been given to the clerical office in the administration of the affairs of the Church, but the ministry has been made to bear too large a burden of Christian service. The pastor has

been held accountable for the financial prosperity of his charge, its increase in membership, its aggressiveness in Church enterprises, as well as its spiritual prosperity. With scores, or hundreds of others pledged to the Master's service, by common consent the pastor has been made responsible for it all. Such was not the case in the apostolic Church. Epistles were indeed written to pastors as to their duties, but the larger epistles were written to entire congregations summoning them to duty and charging them with every Christian responsibility. There was no clericalism in the early Church. It is the product of official usurpation, the abuse of rightful official duties, and the neglect of responsibility by the many. In this new era which as we know is not entirely new, instead of one man using his talents and his energies to advance Church enterprises, let us expect to find a hundred men giving the fruits of their experience, their training, their toil, their native talents, to the tremendous work of making known the way of life to those that are ready to perish, and encouraging them to accept it.

The Laymen's Movement in Foreign Missions will open the way for a similar movement in evangelization at home. The laymen of the country, under the same impulse which prompts them to systematic and united service in behalf of the heathen, will direct their efforts toward relieving spiritual destitutions at home. The Christian business men of our cities would constitute a mighty organization for promoting Christian influences among the neglected masses. It being often said, we have Foreign Missions brought to our doors. The problems of the cities are increasing every year. The spread of the gospel will be the solution of those problems. The sagacity and consecration of Christian business men will be a mighty resource upon which to draw. They will devise sane and effective plans. They will concentrate the power of numbers and of intelligent zeal to the great work and with heavenly blessings upon them they may be expected to transform the aspect of our neglected millions in the crowded cities and the more remote mission fields that are now white unto the harvest.

The British Minister of Education, Mr. Walter Runciman, has taken a firm stand in favor of temperance teaching in the elementary public schools. He has issued an outline of lessons on the subject that are suitable for children and authentic as to statements of facts. He gives this outline of the effects of strong drink: "(a) Waste of money which could be wisely spent or saved. (b) Loss of self-respect. (c) Loss of employment, unfitness for work, pauperism. (d) Ill health, disease, insanity. (e) Neglect of duty, moral degradation, crime. (f) Ruin of home; unhappiness, suffering of men, women and children." The remarkable statement is made that, "the amount spent on drink alone in the United Kingdom every year would be enough to enable everybody to live rent free. To put it another way, it is equal to the cost of all the butchers' meat, bacon, ham, poultry and game eaten every year in the United Kingdom."